news-item captioned "Telecom racket busted" which was published in the 'Hindustan Times' dated the 8th September, 2002;

(b) whether a number of persons have been found indulged in making STD/ISD calls illegally causing loss of crores of rupees; and

(c) if so, the number of persons arrested alongwith the persons against whom action has been taken during the last year and till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) From 1st january, 2001, 82 cases involving private firms/persons have been detected for stealing of telephony bypassing authorized Telecom Network till 15th February 2003 resulting in national loss to service providers. Besides, 32 other cases of misuse of STD/ISD involving 67 persons have also been detected till November 2002. The loss suffered by BSNL/MTNL in 16 of these STD/ISD cases is estimated to around Rs. 1.52 crores and in the remaining cases, the loss could not be assessed.

(c) 59 persons were arrested in this regard since 1st January, 2001 and action has been initiated against them by CBI/Police.

Communication facilities in NER

194. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that if one wishes to call from Agartala to any part of the country has to do an ISD call instead of STD call;

(b) if so, the reasons for such a pitiable communication facilities existing in the North-Eastern Region; and

(c) whether any action has been taken by Government to expand its communication network to all the important cities of the North-Eastern States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Yes, Sir. All the important cities of the North-Eastern States have already been provided with modern and reliable communication network.

Telephones by Telecom Companies

195. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of connections given by the different Telecom Companies under fixed lines WLL Mobile and Cellular Mobile during the last four years, including 2002-03 (up to 31.12.02) year-wise, circle-wise and company-wise;

(b) how many of these connections have been given in rural, semi-urban and urban areas; year-wise and company-wise;

(c) how much USO levy has been collected company-wise and year-wise; and

(d) how much of these funds, have been deployed to commission new connections in the areas eligible for such funds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Postal/Telephone facility in tribal areas of A.P.

196. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that many villages in tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh do not have either post office or village telephone facility;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to provide postal and telephone facilities in such villages within a time frame?